



651 ARTS Fall 2020 Virtual Season
Presents

*The World Premiere of **Memoirs of a... Unicorn: A BLUEPRINT***

From Choreographer **Marjani Forté-Saunders**, Composer **Everett Saunders** and Filmmaker **Meena Murugesan**

A Groundbreaking New Film Celebrating the Black Family
Through the Lens of Black Fatherhood

World Premiere: Thursday, December 3rd at 7pm EST/4pm PST
Showings: December 4th and 5th at 8pm EST/ 5pm PST

(**BROOKLYN, NY** – December 1, 2020) – 651 ARTS, Brooklyn’s premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts, presents the world premiere of a groundbreaking new film - *Memoirs of a... Unicorn: A BLUEPRINT* - exploring the experimental collaging of intimate encounters and experiences in the three year journey of the dance installation *Memoirs of a... Unicorn* by choreographer **Marjani Forté-Saunders** and composer **Everett Saunders**. The film will premiere on Thursday, December 3rd at 7pm EST//4pm PST with showings on December 4th and 5th at 8pm EST/ 5pm PST.

Sitting at the intersections of documentary and experimental art, *Memoirs of a... Unicorn: A BLUEPRINT* offers a multi-sensory visual experience and interpretation of the internal processes and dreams at the core of the original dance piece. Weaving sound and media to offer historic and personal narratives between father and daughter, the original work was inspired by Marjani’s father’s life in Arkansas and explores the tenants of identity, fatherhood and the natural state of ‘blackness’ as a unicorn state – the unreal state of finding one’s self. Directed and designed by filmmaker and Unicorn’s Bessie-Award winning designer **Meena Murugesan**, the film will explore the performative-ness of creative process, the relationship of light and shadow on the screen as a metaphor for the celestial journeys of sun and moon, and the three generations of Black men who orbit

Marjani's life. The premiere evening of the film will include a discussion about process as art with the film's creators.

"The unicorn is tantamount to a different outfit we put on and is the state that we find ourselves in within our Black bodies - traumatized bodies that are also magical and porous connected to the intergenerational stories and experiences of the Black Family" said Marjani. "With *Memoirs...*, it is not a dance film but an opportunity, in this time, to present dance in a new and exciting way. Under Meena's expert gaze, we were able to create an enhanced visual experience that merges some of our behind the scenes and performance footage from the live presentation with unique time-bending narrative that I like to call 'docu-art'."

"In this very unprecedented Holiday Season, we are so excited to present *Memoirs...* in celebration of the Black Family explored through the lens of Black fatherhood," said **Monica L. Williams**, 651's Director of Programs and Chief Curator (DPCC). "With this year finding us as a society having to isolate from our families, this work illustrates how the Black family structure is integral to an individual's self-identity and how through time that structure has been tested - from slavery through Jim Crow to today."

651 ART's Fall 2020 season includes a virtual mix of feature presentations, performances and the launch of new initiatives. 651 leadership made the decision to move forward with a season that will allow the institution to safely serve audiences and to be able to continue to support and provide a platform for local artists as arts organizations across the country continue to navigate through the effects of the global pandemic. The season will center around the theme of "*My Black Art Matters, I Matter*" and will celebrate the resilience and diversity of Black performance.

Since its inception in 1988, 651 ARTS has become a trusted convener of contemporary African Diasporic artistic expression, a champion and nurturer for emerging artists and their work and a vital cultural resource for its surrounding community. As it moves forward, part of 651 ART's mission is to preserve the legacy of Black culture in Brooklyn, celebrate the eclecticism of Black performance and to pioneer new visions of African Diaspora artists. Helmed by Executive Director, David J. Roberts, the institution continues to look ahead and lay the framework for the next five years that will further help to reinforce 651 ARTS' role as a leader of African Diasporic culture while also establishing it an incubator for artistic innovation in the 21st century.

For Tickets and information, please visit: <https://www.651arts.org/unicorn/>

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About 651 ARTS

Founded in Brooklyn, NY in 1988, the mission of 651 ARTS is to deepen awareness of and appreciation of contemporary performing arts and culture of the African Diaspora, and to provide professional and creative opportunities for artists of African descent.

651's signature programs have featured pioneering black choreographers from around the world including Germaine Acogny, Nora Chipaumire, Carmen de Lavallade, Diane McIntyre, Bebe Miller, Abdel R. Salaam and Jawole Willo Jo Zollar. As part of its commitment to the furtherance of conversations and celebration of Diaspora music, the institution has presented dialogues and performances by Somi, Hugh Masekela, and Grammy-winning artist Betty Carter, to name a few. Theatrical and text-based works by Anna Deavere Smith, Sekou Sundiata, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Ntozake Shange, Okwui Okpokwasili and Maria Bauman are representative of the hundreds of artists and productions featuring solo creations, collaborations, emerging artists, and works-in-development all produced by 651's visionary leadership in the field of Black performance.